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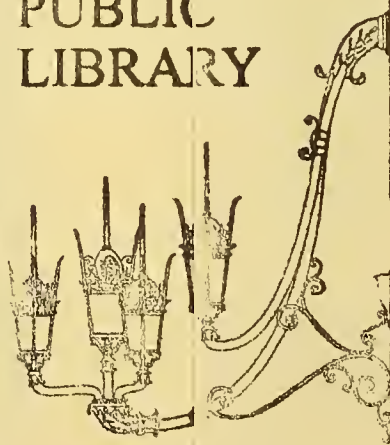
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BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION'S EVALUATION OF
SIGNIFICANCE SYSTEM WITH CRITERIA AND
EXPLANATION OF GROUPINGS

To fulfill its charge to identify, recognize, and protect the architectural and historical resources within Boston, the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) embarked on a comprehensive survey of those resources soon after its establishment in 1975. This systematic, professionally-conducted survey has proceeded on a neighborhood basis to review, identify, research and evaluate sites, structures, and districts for their significance to the local area as well as to the entire city or beyond. It is expected to be completed within the next two years.

Besides the general purpose of making the public more aware of Boston's historic resources, the survey's purpose is to recommend preservation of the significant resources, and to provide relevant information so city agencies can make sensitive informed decisions about property under their jurisdiction. The inventory, like any other data base, provides ready, comparative information that is essential to the process of looking at the inevitable changes within the City.

Methodology

The general methodology for the city-wide preservation survey incorporates four steps: field survey, documentary research, recording, and evaluation of survey findings. Field survey is the initial procedure; it is primarily conducted on foot so that all sites and areas are visually surveyed. Sometimes the survey methodology is adapted to suit a particular set of conditions, as in the downtown commercial areas.

The second procedure involves documentary research using Boston area archives, libraries and relevant public and private repositories to investigate primary and secondary sources. Occasionally information is supplied by an interested property owner.

The resulting information from the field work and research are systematically recorded on Building Information Forms, which is the third procedure. Each form includes a description of the structure, a photograph and a summary of significance based on the research. Collectively, the forms become the inventory.

The fourth procedure is evaluation of the entire visual survey and documentary research. It results in recommendations for preservation mechanisms and priorities. The building information forms themselves provide a basic measure of preservation value, indicating such elements as uniqueness to a neighborhood, representation of an architectural style or type, or a development period, visual prominence, or association with important national or local events, personalities, or industries.

In recent years, the Boston Landmarks Commission has adopted a building evaluation system. Recognizing the difficulty of assigning numerical values to qualities of history, architecture and urban design, the Commission staff grouped buildings and sites into broad categories, as described below. Buildings constructed after 1960 are not ranked, because objectivity of the recent past is difficult to achieve.

The evaluation system has six groupings as follows:

I. Highest Significance

Buildings in this group are considered to have national significance

- o as buildings associated with Boston history, particularly the Colonial or Revolutionary War periods;
- o as nationally known examples of the work of Boston architects; or,
- o as examples of particular building styles or types which became prototypes for similar buildings throughout the nation or which are rare throughout the nation.

All buildings in this category merit designation as Boston Landmarks and individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Designation as a Boston Landmark involves protection against demolition and involves design review of subsequent exterior alterations. Outstanding interior spaces can also be specially designated as Landmarks. Listing in the National Register provides more limited protection against demolition or adverse impact from Federal action and makes owners eligible for Federal income tax incentives for rehabilitation. Listing in the State Register provides a building with similar protection from State action, but it carries no incentives.

II. Major Significance

Buildings in this category are considered to have the highest significance to the City of Boston, the Commonwealth and the New England Region

- o as the city's most outstanding examples of their style or building type, distinguished for high architectural quality and high degree of intactness;
- o as early or rare examples of the use of a particular style or building technology in Boston;
- o as the best examples of the work of major Boston architects;
- o as buildings outstanding in their setting, with particular urban design value; or,
- o as buildings of the highest regional or local historical significance.

Although often less well known than buildings of Highest Significance, these buildings are also considered to meet the criteria for designation as Boston Landmarks, as well as being potentially eligible for individual listing in the

National Register of Historic Places. Designation as a Boston Landmark involves protection against demolition and involves design review of proposed exterior alterations. Outstanding interior spaces can also be specifically designated as Landmarks. Listing in the National Register provides more limited protection against demolition or adverse impact from Federal action and allows owners to take advantage of Federal income tax incentives for rehabilitation. Listing in the State Register provides a building with similar protections from State action, but it carries no incentives.

III. Significant

Buildings in this group are considered to be of significance to the City of Boston

- o as fine examples of the work of Boston architects;
- o as buildings which make an important contribution to the character of a street or area;
- o as buildings with strong historical associations with major Boston industries, organizations, institutions or events; or,
- o as fine examples of a particular style or building type.

There are a large number of buildings in this group. Some may meet the criteria for designation as Boston Landmarks, and these have been sub-categorized as Group III, Further Study. If after further study it is found that such buildings are significant to the Commonwealth, or the New England region as well as to the City of Boston, they may be designated as Landmarks.

All buildings in Group III are considered eligible for individual or district listing in the National Register of Historic Places and as such would also be eligible for listing in the State Register of Historic Places. Listing in the National Register provides all Group III buildings with limited protection against demolition or adverse impact as the result of Federal action and also allows owners to take advantage of Federal income tax incentives for rehabilitation. Listing in the State Historic Register provides buildings with similar protections from State action, but it carries no incentives.

IV. Notable

Buildings in this group are considered important to the character of the particular street, neighborhood, or area

- o as an integral part of a visually cohesive streetscape or integral element within a district;
- o as buildings with some individual architectural distinction, whether because of their materials, craftsmanship or detailing;
- o as the best example in their area of particular style or building type; or,
- o as buildings with some local historical significance.

Notable buildings are not considered significant enough to be designated as Boston City Landmarks or to be listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places. If they are located within a National Register District, the building owner may be eligible for tax incentives for rehabilitation. The property is protected from adverse impacts as a result of Federal or State action through an environmental review process.

V. Minor

Buildings in this group are of little architectural or historical interest but may be considered to make a minor contribution to the streetscape.

- o as buildings which are compatible with surrounding structures in scale, style, materials, or fenestration patterns, or
- o as buildings with some architectural interest or integrity.

Buildings in this group are not considered eligible for designation as Boston City Landmarks or for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If a building falls within a National Register District, and it is considered to have enough integrity and relate sufficiently to the significant themes of the nominated district, the building owner is allowed to take advantage of Federal tax incentives for rehabilitation. The property is protected from adverse impacts as a result of Federal or State action through an environmental review process.

VI. Non-contributing

Buildings in this group are considered to be visual intrusions, incompatible with the surrounding urban fabric. If these buildings are located within National Register Districts, they are not eligible for tax incentives for rehabilitation, and may be exempted from tax penalties for demolition.